

**Minnesota STAR  
Program**  
A System of  
Technology to  
Achieve Results



*Minnesota's Assistive Technology Act  
Program*

# Constellations

Winter 2006

Assistive Technology (AT) Works!

## New State AT Plan!

STAR is proud to announce that its proposed three-year assistive technology plan for Minnesota was approved in September by its federal funder, Rehabilitation Services Administration.

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This plan was developed after months of research, meetings with Minnesota's Assistive Technology Advisory Council and discussion with others active in the disability community. The plan focuses on activities that help consumers gain access to assistive technology and reduce barriers to acquisition of needed devices and services. The AT Act of 1998, as amended requires that all state AT Act programs support all or some of the following activities: device demonstration, device loan, device recycling and alternative financing.

Highlights from the state plan include:

- Work to improve access to reutilization services statewide
- Work to increase reutilization of used AT devices through equipment exchange
- Work to increase access to equipment maintenance and repair services
- Work to increase access to AT through device loan and demonstration programs



*(continued on page 4)*

## All Aboard: Making it Easier to go Boating

If you or anyone you know has problems getting into or out of boats, you may be interested in new technology being developed by a Minnesota-based design firm.

BlueSky Designs was awarded a Small Business Innovation Research grant from the US Department of Agriculture to develop technology that makes it easier and safer for people with mobility impairments to go boating. Phase I of the SBIR project was completed in December, with 20 consumers recruited by Wilderness Inquiry and Courage Center's recreation program providing input and feedback on preliminary designs.



The focus is on developing portable transfer technology so people can go boating wherever they want to. Accessories may be developed for permanent attachment to docks or boats, and add-ons may make it possible to get into and out of the water, or onto ATVs.

At this point, BlueSky Designs is applying for Phase II funding. If funded, further development will begin in the summer of 2006. As part of the Phase II application process, BlueSky Designs is looking toward commercialization and is seeking support from potential partners or investors who may be interested in the technology.

If you'd like to be part of the development process as a consumer or family member, kept informed of the progress, or you are interested in helping commercialize the technology, contact BlueSky Designs at 651-603-0828 or toll-free from outside the Twin Cities at 877-603-0828.

BlueSky Designs is a St. Paul-based company focused on developing new technology that makes it possible for people with disabilities to do what they want to do more independently. As a result of another SBIR grant funded by the Department of Agriculture, the Freedom Tent, an accessible tent design they developed was brought to market by Eureka in 2005. For more information, check out [www.blueskydesigns.us](http://www.blueskydesigns.us)

## Calling STAR

Please make a note of our new telephone numbers and keep them handy in case you need to contact STAR.

Main Number:	(651) 201-2640
Toll-Free Number:	(888) 234-1267
Fax Number:	(651) 282-6671
MN Relay at 711 or	(800) 627-3529
Chuck Rassbach	(651) 201-2298
Kim Moccia	(651) 201-2297
Joan Gillum	(651) 201-2296



## New Podcast

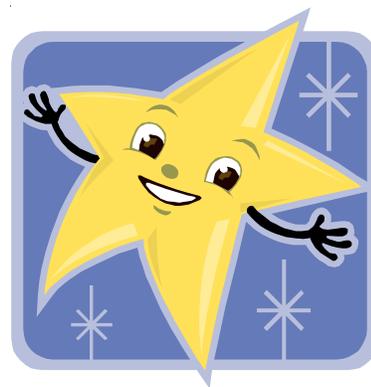
Barrier Free IT - Tips & Tricks  
 Subscribe at <http://easi.cc/podcasts/>

## Stay in the Know

Have an AT question? Want to share resources, product or event news? Join the STAR Point Listserv an open forum where assistive technology issues are discussed and knowledge is shared with a vision toward improving acquisition, access and AT use in Minnesota. You may join the listserv through STAR's Web site or by sending an e-mail request to [star.program@state.mn.us](mailto:star.program@state.mn.us) with *Subscribe STAR Point* in the subject line. Please include the e-mail address you are subscribing in your request.

## Congratulations!

Jennifer Giesen, a member of STAR's Advisory Council, was recently appointed to the National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership (NATTAP) steering committee on Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology. NATTAP, which is funded by Rehabilitation Services Administration, provides technical assistance, training and information services to aid AT Act programs in implementing their state plans. Jennifer is a staff attorney with the Minnesota Disability Law Center.



State Plan *continued from page 1*

STAR will continue to provide the following core services:

1. Information and Referral
2. STAR Funding Directory
3. STAR Web site
4. Constellations Newsletter
5. STAR Point (Internet Radio Show)
6. Training
7. Technical assistance
8. Coordinate and collaborate with other state, public and private entities responsible for policies, procedures and funding relating to assistive technology

A copy of the plan is available on STAR's Web site [www.admin.state.mn.us/assistivetech](http://www.admin.state.mn.us/assistivetech) or by contacting the STAR Office.

## AT Consumers Needed

Please contact STAR if you are an AT consumer living outside the Twin Cities area and have an interest in serving on STAR's Advisory Council.

[star.program@state.mn.us](mailto:star.program@state.mn.us)

## STAR says Good-bye

For more than three years Earle Harrison was at the forefront of STAR activities—from training and product demonstration to technical assistance and Internet radio—Earle's work embodied a System of Technology to Achieve Results. It is understandable then that he felt the time was right to fulfill a life long dream of starting his own business. Triumph Technology provides assistive technology services with an emphasis on solutions for people who are blind or have low vision. Minnesota's AT community has gained an experienced service provider and technology resource. Good luck, Earle!

## Thank you!

STAR would like to thank Gillette

Lifetime Specialty Healthcare Clinic for hosting our CJT Mounting System workshop on February 1 & 2. Gillette also provided power and manual chairs so attendees could practice a variety of mounting scenarios using STAR's new CJT Eval Kit. This kit will be available for professionals to borrow when evaluating consumer needs relating to mounting options. If you would like more information about the CJT Mounting Systems Eval Kit, please contact the STAR office.



Workshop attendees explore mounting options

## Research on New, Accessible Mounting Technology: Consumer and Service Provider Input Needed

Two projects funded by Small Business Innovation Research grants awarded from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the US Department of Education's National Institutes on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) are being conducted by St. Paul-based BlueSky Designs.

Both projects focus on developing more independently accessible mounting hardware that attach to wheelchairs, beds or workstations. The NIH-funded project focuses on developing hardware that will enable individuals with limited strength and dexterity to reposition things attached to the mount. The mounting arm can be set up to lock in specific positions, but low effort controls allow a person to free it for easy repositioning. Multiple devices, such as inclined book stands and rotating trays, may be attached, increasing access and choices. It may be customized for a user's abilities and changing needs, with universal quick releases, adjustable resistance and bed or table mounts.

The NIDRR-funded project, building on the other concept, will involve developing powered mounting hardware which can be controlled via switches or voice.

**Consumers and professionals are needed** to provide input through focus groups, interviews, usability testing, and extended testing in a person's own environment. The design will be refined based on their input. Courage Center, Express Yourself of Minnesota, assistive technology professionals in the Minnesota Department of Education, and other organizations are also involved in providing input.

If you would like to be involved in focus groups or testing, give BlueSky Designs a call at 651-603-0828, or call toll-free from outside the Twin Cities at 877-603-0828.

### AT Spotlight

Imagine surfing the Web and never having to click your mouse button. If this sounds appealing to you, check out the Clickless Web at <http://www.theclicklessweb.com>. The Clickless Web is currently a free showcase service provided by Designer Appliances Inc.; however, there are plans to eventually turn it into a subscription service. The company believes this service will build assistive technology ramps for the Internet by easing the need for gripping and clicking mice while Web surfing. Cowabunga!

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## STAR welcomes a new team member

The summer of 2005 brought a number of new beginnings to the STAR program including the hiring of STAR's new AT Resource Specialist, Kim Moccia. Some of you may already know Kim who managed People Achieving Change Through Technology (PACTT) in Rochester before joining STAR. Active in the AT community, Kim is a graduate of CSUN's Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program (ATACP). Welcome, Kim!



## Events

### Charting the Cs

The 15th Annual Charting the Cs Assistive Technology in Special Education Conference will be held at the Arrowwood Conference Center in Alexandria, Minnesota, **April 24-25, 2006**. This year's conference will highlight tools and strategies supporting students' access to the general education curriculum, as well as, strategies to support recreation and leisure opportunities. For additional information please contact Nikki Walker, Conference Connections, at 763-245-0464.



### Up to the MN\*AT Summer Institute

Plans are in the works for the sixth annual Up to the MN\*AT Summer Institute, **June 12-16, 2006** at the Minnesota Department of Education in Roseville. This year's institute will focus on universal design for learning and supports for AT users transitioning to post-secondary settings. The institute provides intense learning opportunities in a small learner setting for professionals interested in assistive technology in special education. For additional information contact Joan Breslin Larson at [Joan.Breslin-Larson@state.mn.us](mailto:Joan.Breslin-Larson@state.mn.us)

### Zippity Zoo Day

Zippity Zoo Day is **June 16, 2006** at Como Zoo, Saint Paul brought to you by DynaVox, AbleNet, the Twin Cities Autism Society and United Cerebral Palsy of Minnesota. This fun-filled day is for anyone who uses a communication device to socialize with others who also use communication devices. For information contact Jo Erbes at 651-646-7588 or [ucpmn@cpinternet.com](mailto:ucpmn@cpinternet.com)

During the upcoming months **PACER Simon Technology Center** encourages you to take part in some of the great activities that they have to offer:

The renovated **Creation Station** is again open one Saturday per month for arts and crafts. These activities are free and available for all ages of children with all disabilities. Private birthday parties are also available in the Creation Station to groups of children. PACER will provide the space and activity for \$25.00 per event. For more information, visit [www.pacer.org/stc/creation.htm](http://www.pacer.org/stc/creation.htm).

The **IBM EXITE** (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp is getting underway for the fourth year. Applications are available to any middle school girl with a disability, who is interested in math, science, or technology. The free camp will be held this summer for five days at PACER Center, and it will offer hands-on opportunities for girls to build Web pages, tear down computers, and explore with robotic technology. For more details, visit [www.pacer.org/stc/exite.htm](http://www.pacer.org/stc/exite.htm).

For other assistive technology resources, free workshops, and hands-on training opportunities for parents and professionals, we encourage you to visit [www.pacer.org/stc/workshops.htm](http://www.pacer.org/stc/workshops.htm). If there are questions regarding any of these events, please call 952-838-9000.

## Technology for Transition

Look for *Technology for Transition* a series of articles in upcoming issues of Constellations. This series will highlight technology that individuals with disabilities can use to transition from institution to community living.



## Online Resources

**Blog:** United Spinal Association ([www.unitedspinal.org](http://www.unitedspinal.org)) *Action Online*

**Web site:** The Family Center on Technology and Disability ([www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info))

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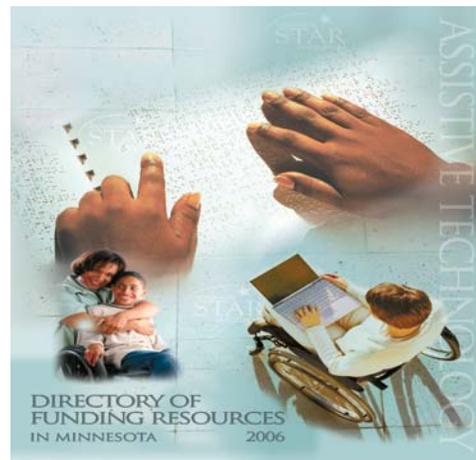
Fax: 651-282-6671

E-mail: [star.program@state.mn.us](mailto:star.program@state.mn.us)

Check our Web site at  
[www.admin.state.mn.us/  
assistivetechology](http://www.admin.state.mn.us/assistivetechology)

## Request a copy of the 2006 Assistive Technology Directory

Would you like a free copy of the 2006 Assistive Technology Directory of Funding Resources? Call 651-201-2640 or toll-free 888-234-1267 to request one or more copies of this popular directory.



### **All STAR materials are available in alternative formats**

¡FOLLETOS EN ESPAÑOL! STAR ha empezado traducir folletos en Inglés a Español. Actualmente, STAR tiene dos folletos en Español: "Directorio de Recursos de Financiamiento para Tecnología Asistiva en Minnesota" y "El Programa STAR: Un Sistema de Tecnología para Lograr Resultados.

STAR does not endorse or recommend any particular product, individual or agency. The posting of information in this newsletter and on STAR's Web site is educational in nature and does not imply endorsement by STAR's funder, the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

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